

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-28 are present in this application. Claims 3-28 have been withdrawn from consideration.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 4,577,675 to Ishihara et al. in view of International Patent Publication WO 99/28690 to Valle et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action acknowledges that Ishihara lacks the claimed disc members containing cordierite or an inorganic fiber and a binder. The Office Action contends, however, that the Valle publication discloses these features and that it would have been obvious to use cordierite-containing ceramic in the disc roll of Ishihara in view of Valle. Applicant respectfully disagrees with this conclusion.

The “cordierite” disclosed in Valle is not a crystalline cordierite as defined in claim 1, but rather corresponds to a compounded cordierite. See the present specification in the paragraph bridging pages 27-28. Compounded cordierite essentially requires crystallization treatment such as heating treatment at a temperature from 1100 - 1400°C (more exactly, a temperature equal to or higher than 1350°C) so as to be transformed into crystalline cordierite. See, for example, page 13 of the present specification and page 7, lines 10-13 of Valle. As a consequence, in the case of the material disclosed in Valle, the desired thermal shock resistance cannot be obtained without an appropriate crystallization treatment.

In contrast, where the raw material containing a crystalline cordierite-containing ceramic powder as defined in the claimed invention is used, thermal shock resistance attributable to cordierite can be obtained without requiring a heat treatment (as high as 1350°C). As discussed previously, the claimed structure provides unexpected remarkable effects of improving spalling

resistance. The remarks in this regard in the Request for Reconsideration filed August 16, 2007 are hereby incorporated by reference.

Applicant thus respectfully submits that Ishihara and Valle, taken singly or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest the claimed disc members containing a crystalline cordierite-containing ceramic powder, an inorganic fiber and a binder, and as such, Applicant submits that the rejection of claim 1 is misplaced.

With regard to dependent claim 2, Applicant submits that this claim is allowable at least by virtue of its dependency on an allowable independent claim.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are patentable over the art of record and that the application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable in order to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Prompt passage to issuance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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